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RUEHSI/AMEMBASSY TBILISI IMMEDIATE 1636
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RUEHFT/AMCONSUL FRANKFURT IMMEDIATE 1595
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EUR/CARC, S/CT AND CA; FRANKFURT FOR MCESC REGION I

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/30/2027
TAGS: ASEC CASC PTER PINR AJ
SUBJECT: AZERBAIJAN - BAKU EAC MEETING, 10/30/2007

REF: A. BAKU 1296
¶B. BAKU 1295
¶C. BAKU 1294

Classified By: Ambassador Anne E. Derse per 1.4 (b,c,d).

¶1. (S/NF) The Ambassador convened a meeting of EAC members (AMB, DCM, CONS, DAO, GRPO, MGT, MSG, ODC, Peace Corps, PD, POL/ECON, and RSO) on October 30, 2007 at 1530 to review the latest information and our current security posture in response to a specific threat against the U.S. Embassy (reftels). GRPO, who had just returned from a meeting with senior Ministry of National Security (MNS) officials, briefed the EAC on the MNS' efforts to investigate and capture the group. The MNS today outlined the details of the plot, which led the EAC to conclude that the attack was likely timed to happen on October 27, was hurriedly prepared, and not a planned suicide attack. MNS assesses that the group never had the intention to try to take over the compound. Instead, the group planned to attack from the exterior with grenades and light weapons in order make a political statement. It was not, in the assessment of our GRPO Chief, a sophisticated attack plan, nor did the group appear to have current links to outside groups or to be responding in any way to external taskings.

¶2. (S/NF) Based on interrogations of the six group members in detention, the MNS said the group of extremists, affiliated in a loose "jamiyaat" ("society," in Azerbaijani, a term used to describe both violent and non-violent Islamic groups) had begun planning an attack on an unspecified target only in the last week. According to the MNS, a jailed leader of the al-Qa'ida Kavkaz group had reached out during the last three months to alleged group leader Kamran Asadov, whom he had known prior to Asadov's military service. Through SMS communications, the al-Qa'ida Kavkaz leader reportedly urged Asadov to "do something" and convinced him to steal weapons and plan an attack against "infidels." According to MNS information, Asadov stole weapons from his military unit October 24-25 and, along with other group members, conducted surveillance against the Embassy on October 26. The group reportedly planned to lob grenades and fire automatic weapons at the Chancery and then flee; contrary to press reporting, the MNS told GRPO that the group intended to target only the U.S. Embassy Chancery. The group reportedly did not intend to conduct suicide operations. The MNS continues to search for the three fugitives, in an intensive manhunt in the Baku

suburbs, but believes the operation has been foiled. The local press also has carried reports of arrests in Siyazan and Devechi (home to significant Salafist and Wahabbist communities) as well as "one hundred" arrests of suspect Wahabbists within the Ministry of Defense. There is no MNS information linking these arrests to the group planning an attack against the U.S. Embassy. A full report on the MNS information will be sent via GRPO channels.

¶3. (C) RSO briefed the EAC on our continued efforts to enhance security. The Embassy security remains heightened with ten additional armed police at the Chancery, three at the Annex and four at the Ambassador's residence. DS is sending a Mobile Security Division team. The Marines conducted drills today. The local guard force and surveillance detection team have gone on 24 hour operations. The RSO is working with the owner of the Annex building to install metal detectors and other security screening at the ground floor of the facility (to supplement the equipment on the floor with our offices).

¶4. (S/NF) Based on the new information provided by MNS, the EAC concurred with GRPO's analysis that the group's ability to plan and execute a sophisticated attack was far less advanced than may have been apparent based on earlier, preliminary information. Although three suspects and significant amounts of weapons and ammunition remain at large, the group's relatively recent formation and quick, haphazard planning and surveillance indicate that that the three fugitives have a relatively limited ability to carry out an attack. The EAC believes the MNS is taking every possible measure to apprehend the fugitives, and the Embassy has taken all possible measures to enhance our security posture with full cooperation from the GOAJ.

¶5. (C) The EAC recommended that the Ambassador seek authorization to resume full operations. The EAC also recommended that all Chancery staff report to work on Wednesday, October 31, on a staggered arrival plan. Staff with last names beginning A-K will report to work from 0830 until 0930, and staff with last names beginning L-Z will report to work from 0930 until 1000. Peace Corps staff will follow the Embassy's lead and allow staff to report to work tomorrow with no public services. The Embassy will not resume public services until authorization is received from the Department, nor will Landmark unclassified annex staff report to work until authorization is received from the Department (request sent septel). The EAC agreed that the Ambassador should hold a town hall meeting with Chancery staff at 1100 on October 31, and hold a separate meeting with annex staff as soon as they report to work. The Embassy, in consultation with CA/OCS, will issue a warden message indicating that the Embassy is in the process of resuming normal operations and will inform the public when public services are once again available. The EAC agreed to meet again at 1400 on Wednesday, October 31.

¶6. (U) The EAC meeting concluded at 1650.
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